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ABSTRACT

Tribal colleges are attracting, retaining, and educating a new population of Native students. These 24 institutions are characterized by their location on reservations, governance by local boards, dedicated faculty and administrators, intercollegiate cooperation and collaboration, frugal management of material resources, and the central role of Native spiritual and cultural values. Local control has been a basic premise of the tribal college movement, and has shaped individual colleges to meet the needs and preferences of their communities. Facing similar problems, founders of the first tribal colleges formed the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). AIHEC provides networks for faculty, administrators, and students, and has addressed itself to legislative advocacy, fundraising, faculty and staff development, and sharing of resources. Nontraditional students are the norm, and students are predominantly female, older, residentially isolated, and poor, with a high school equivalency diploma and family responsibilities. Successful student recruitment and retention are related to the accessibility and accountability of these institutions to their communities, simultaneous enrollment of family members, good teacher-student relationships, financial aid, student support services, and good institutional social climate. Curriculum, educational philosophy, teaching styles, and teaching methods vary between colleges, reflecting community needs and values. Successful educational outcomes include graduates having high employment rates, continuing on to higher degrees, and getting off federal assistance and welfare, as well as community economic development outcomes. However, federal funding is inadequate and shrinking. Increasing federal and state aid and private and corporate support are recommended. (SV)

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Underfunded Miracles: Tribal Colleges

Schuyler Houser

Introduction

Tribal colleges are succeeding. These 24 reservation-based postsecondary institutions attract, retain, and educate a new population of American Indian and Alaskan Native students. During a period when enrollments of some groups of urban minority students have been declining throughout the nation, college enrollments of Native students have increased steadily in the 1980s. Tribal colleges have expanded educational opportunities available to Native students for whom, otherwise, college would be inaccessible.

The quality of education provided by the tribal colleges has been validated repeatedly, not only by the performance of their students, but also by regional accrediting associations. As of early 1991, six of the colleges are candidates for accreditation, 14 are accredited at the associate degree level, two — Sinte Gleska and Oglala Lakota — are accredited at the baccalaureate level, and one of those, Sinte Gleska, is accredited at the master's level. Increasing numbers of non-Native colleges, universities and foundations institutions are acknowledging the value of the colleges. An administrator at The College of William & Mary, in Williamsburg, made this clear in the written testimony which she submitted to the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force:

> The [Task Force] needs to understand the ambivalence with which American Indians view Western education. Historically, it has separated children from their tribes and culture, and left them unable to succeed in either world. Western education did not teach any of the skills needed to survive as an Indian; prejudice against Indians prevented them from surviving in the Western world, even with an education. Therefore, Western education was worse than useless, it was destructive. While this is less true than it was 300 years ago, the legacy remains.
>
> I have no wonderful solutions for your [Task Force] on how to solve this problem, but I do have one small suggestion. I believe that tribal colleges are the best hope for higher education for many American Indians ...

No single approach or feature accounts for the success of the colleges. Among the defining characteristics of the colleges, however, their location on reservations, and their governance by local boards, are key. As institutional members of the communities — and the cultures — they serve, the colleges are able to identify and solve problems in their own ways, with their own skills and resources. The persistence and dedication of faculty, administrators, and board members are crucial; many participants have stayed with their institutions, despite low salaries and grueling working conditions, since the colleges opened. These individuals have developed — and shared — essential, long-term experience. This sharing, in fact, constitutes a third vital ingredient for the success of the colleges. From the outset, the colleges have served as each others' best sources of advice, support, and technical assistance. Fourth, frugal and prudent management of material resources has been a hallmark of the colleges' administrative styles (Shanley, 1989, p. 7). Finally, and most essentially, each college acknowledges traditional Native spiritual values, based in its own tribe's living culture, as central in defining its role in the community. Traditional spiritual leaders were prominent among the founders of several tribal colleges. Their ways of looking at the world have shaped the character, not only of their particular institutions, but of the tribal college movement as a whole.

Beginnings and First Principles

The first tribal colleges were founded in the late 1960s and early 1970s, amidst the national ferment of activism for civil rights and Native self-determination. Leaders in many Native communities had come to recognize both the value and the vulnerability of their own tribal ways of life. The credibility of the federal government as the protector of tribes and tribal cultures had been eroded seriously through responses to such challenges to established policies as the Trail of Broken Treaties. Governmental agencies and centralized programs did not seem to offer promising solutions to serious Native issues. Self-governance and the building of local institutions appeared, to some visionaries, as the course which their communities

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must take if they were to survive (Lionel Bordeaux, personal communication, Jan. 11, 1991).

Higher education, and access to the abilities which it develops, proved a special problem to Native people. Elected tribal officials and Elders on several reservations saw that federal policies towards higher education were not serving Native students or Native communities. Repeatedly, young people would leave their reservations to enroll in postsecondary institutions, and repeatedly, the students would return within a semester or two. The distances which students had to travel — cultural, social, economic, emotional, as well as geographic — often proved too large, and the reception they received at their new institutions often proved insufficiently sustaining. Students, even very bright and determined students, responded by going home.

Community leaders on several reservations recognized that discouragement and dropouts served neither the needs of individual students, nor of the tribal communities themselves. These leaders began to discuss the possibility of founding their own local colleges. Among the early advocates were several traditional Elders who had not received much formal education themselves, but who recognized clearly the values of education for their tribes. These early leaders, from the outset, envisioned local institutions the colleges, locally-controlled and locally-focused. Ideas for a single, national college or university to serve all tribes had been circulated in the United States since at least 1911, but nothing substantive ever came of these ideas (Crum, 1989, pp. 20-23). Tribal colleges came into existence only as individual tribes began, one by one, to address their own needs for postsecondary education.

In 1968, the Navajo Nation became the first tribe to establish its own college, by granting a charter to Navajo Community College. Three years later, the Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation created Oglala Sioux Community College, and later in the same year, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe chartered Sinte Gleska College. By 1972, tribally-controlled colleges had also been established on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation, the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, and the Hoopa Tribe had sanctioned D-Q University at Davis, California.

Although these first institutions each possessed a distinct tribal and institutional identity, they also shared several family resemblances. Many of these common features were taken as models by tribal colleges which developed subsequently. Each was established by a charter granted by a tribal council; from the first, tribal colleges were set up as independent, free-standing institutions, not as programs administered directly by Native governments. Each college had its own governing board, composed of members of the chartering tribe. Each board had an arms-length relationship, at closest, to the local tribal council, to insulate the college from undue political influence. The charter of each institution defined, as one purpose of the college, the serving of the postsecondary educational needs of its own tribal community. Each charter explicitly recognized that the college should have a special relationship to the culture and values of the tribe served.

Local control, therefore, has been a basic premise of the tribal college movement since its beginnings, and each of the colleges regards it as an essential requirement for the building of a successful organization. The responsibilities which accompany local control provide important safeguards for each college. A tribe which wants its own college must make explicit commitments, by granting legal authority through a charter, and often by providing financial resources, facilities, and organizational support for the start-up. In fact, many Native governments have continued to provide resources to their colleges. Uncommitted money is scarce for most tribes; however, buildings, land, and services have all been provided, as well as political support in dealing with federal — and occasionally state — governmental agencies.

Local control, over the long-term, is shaping individual colleges to meet the specific educational needs of their communities. The institutions are diverse, and become more so as they mature; each has its own history, educational philosophy, limitations, and resources. Curricula, both academic and vocational, reflect the social, economic, and cultural situations of individual reservations. Local needs and preferences set the pacing of college development and innovation. Styles of management and human relationships within the organizations are grounded in the cultural values of the communities they serve (Houser, in press). Local control ensures that the colleges do not stand apart from their communities. Instead, the institutions focus community energies and activities on a wide range of issues.

The Value of Mutual Support

While local control was one of the initial premises of the tribal colleges, founders of the first institutions likewise saw that their colleges, despite geographical and cultural separation, faced many problems in common. So they built an organization which would allow for continuing interchanges of information and mutual support. In

October, 1972, presidents of the six existing colleges met in Washington, D.C. The plans which emerged from their conversations led, by June, 1973, to the formation of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) (Stein, 1990, pp. 189-19). While local control was one of the initial premises of the tribal colleges, founders of the first institutions likewise saw that their colleges, despite geographical and cultural separation, faced many problems in common. So they built an organization which would allow for continuing interchanges of information and mutual support. In October, 1972, presidents of the six existing colleges met in Washington, D.C. The plans which emerged from their conversations led, by June, 1973, to the information of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) (Stein, 1990 pp. 189-19). The consortium now includes, as full members, the 24 tribally-controlled institutions, reservation-based colleges and two affiliate or associate members: Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute and Haskell Indian Junior College, both controlled and funded directly by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The network which has evolved through AIHEC is a unique source of strength for the tribal colleges. The college presidents meet quarterly as the AIHEC board of directors. These meetings serve as continuing information exchanges for all institutions, and, in effect, training sessions for new presidents of colleges. The frequency and regularity of these meetings, and the considerable experience of many of the participants, makes them a sustaining resource for the tribal colleges.

The AIHEC network has expanded beyond the presidents to incorporate college faculty, administrators, and students. As time, work, and money permit, staff visit each others' institutions to share information and build skills. A special tradition has grown up around accreditation. Colleges preparing for external reviews from their regional accreditation agencies regularly arrange pre-visits from administrators and faculty from other tribal colleges, to insure that institutional systems are in good shape for inspection. Most colleges report that the reviews during these previsits (which are usually done at no cost to the college) are at least as rigorous as, and somewhat more skeptical than, the reviews conducted by the accrediting agencies themselves. On a day-to-day basis, colleges share copies of institutional documents — curricula, policies, forms, internal studies, grant proposals — as part of their commitment to mutual support. This sustained commitment is particularly noteworthy; it occurs despite the fact that the tribal colleges must regularly compete against each other, contesting for limited federal and foundation grant dollars. Nonetheless, support is regularly offered, and generously given.

AIHEC has also proven its abilities in legislative advocacy. The first tribal colleges were established with temporary funding, and very little of it. By 1978, the colleges had succeeded in persuading the United States Congress to pass legislation authorizing annual federal support for operations (Congress later added provisions to match college-raised endowment funds). According to staff of the House Education and Labor Committee, the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act was the first piece of education legislation to be written by, and successful lobbied by, Native people themselves. AIHEC has needed to continue its legislative work, returning every year to Washington to make its case for appropriations, and every two or three years for reauthorization of its basic legislation. Since 1981, these efforts have been conducted primarily by the college presidents themselves. The consortium has been unable to afford its own office in Washington, or a full-time staff member for the organization.

The colleges have begun to work together on fundraising. The American Indian College Fund (AICF), which organized formally in 1988, seeks support nation-wide for scholarships, endowments, and other uses which will benefit all the tribal colleges. The Fund raised $1,000,000 in its first year of operation. Meanwhile, each college also continues its own individual development and fundraising activities. Several foundations and corporations have provided assistance to get the AICF started: the Phelps-Stokes Fund; US West Corporation; the Lilly Foundation; the Pew Charitable Trusts; Exxon Education Foundation; the Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation; and the Rockefeller Foundation. (Support for start-up activities from prominent and distinguished organizations is especially helpful at early stages of the AICF's growth; recognition from major donors enhances the Fund's credibility with other potential benefactors, and provides a stable base for operations.) The new organization has developed its own board of directors, begun direct mail, corporate and personal solicitations, and opened an office in New York City. Monies have already been disbursed to all member institutions, for distribution as scholarships to individual students selected by the colleges themselves. The AICF has also established its own endowment fund, assisted by a challenge grant from the MacArthur Foundation and a contribution from the Hearst Foundation (Barbara Bratone, personal communication, Dec. 12, 1990).

The colleges are also collaborating on faculty and staff development. With a grant from the Ford Foundation, the colleges began in the summer of 1990 a training institute for mid-level administrators. The program, administered by Salish Kootenai College and housed at the Center for Native American Studies at Montana State University, provided 18 participants with 2 weeks of intensive training. Student evaluations of this initial session were highly positive, and plans are underway to repeat and refine the institute in following summers (Stein, 1990).

Smaller groups of tribal colleges are finding new ways to collaborate. The five tribal colleges in North Dakota (Turtle Mountain, Fort Berthold, Standing Rock, United Tribes Technical College, and Little Hoop) are, with support from the Bush Foundation, working with local state-supported universities in faculty exchanges. Tribal colleges provide resources and expertise to the state institutions on issues of cultural diversity and ways to work with minority students. The universities provide tribal college staff with contacts and opportunities to work with colleagues in professional disciplines. The project also allows for team-teaching, exchanges of courses, and use of distance-education techniques. The development of similar local networks is under discussion in South Dakota and Montana.

As the colleges gain experience and resources, older types of collaboration are being modified to suit new conditions. New colleges, for example, can now turn to established tribal colleges for a kind of institutional parenthood. Most tribal colleges began as satellites of a nearby accredited state college or university. At best, these relationships provided a kind of apprenticeship for tribal college staff, most of whom were new to their professional roles. The linkages also helped to meet federal guidelines for student aid programs, which were essential for both students and for the fledgling colleges themselves. Working together, however, frequently proved difficult for both parties; geographical, cultural, and institutional differences provided ample opportunities for misunderstanding, stress, and disagreements. As individual tribal colleges reach candidacy for accreditation, federal rules allow them to manage their own financial aid programs. The satellite relationships with the larger institutions are then customarily allowed to lapse.

Tribal colleges are now becoming organizational parents themselves. Since Salish Kootenai College has completed its accreditation process, it has sponsored two satellites of its own, Stone Child College and Fort Belknap Community College. By all accounts, including those of the regional accrediting association, the relationships have been smooth and productive models of their type. The two newer institutions have themselves achieved candidacy status, and they continue to collaborate with Salish Kootenai on a variety of projects.

Students and their Communities

Non-traditional students are the norm at tribal colleges. Women predominate; at most institutions, between two-thirds and three-quarters of all students are female. The median age for students is between 29 and 30 years At some of the more established colleges, however, younger students are enrolling in increasing numbers. As the colleges build track records in their own communities, students and high school counselors come to see the schools as their institutions of first preference. Large numbers of students do not have high school diplomas. Up to one-half of the student body at some colleges has earned a high school equivalency diploma through a General Education Development program (GED), in many cases, through their college's adult basic education program (Carnegie Foundation, 1990, p. 41). Most tribal college students are family-responsible, with children (and often older dependents) living in their households. Significantly, many students describe the close presence of their families as a primary source of support for their academic efforts, not as a source of conflicting obligations. Most students attend full-time. Most are unemployed, and have been unemployed for a significant period prior to enrolling in college. The overwhelming majority of tribal college students are the first members of their families to attend college; again, this percentage is declining as several generations of families, or whole groups of cousins, begin to enroll virtually simultaneously.

The communities in which tribal college students live are, economically, the poorest in the United States. Seventeen of the colleges are located in chronically distressed agricultural areas of the northern Great Plains. The magnitude of reservation economic problems was revealed in a national study, (Johnson, 1987) conducted by the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church,which identified the 25 poorest counties in the United States. Of these counties, seven are located in South Dakota on reservations served by tribal colleges. Per capita income in these seven counties in 1986 ranged from $4,580 on the Cheyenne River Reservation, to $3,244 in Shannon County on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Economic conditions are similar throughout other reserva-

tions in the northern plains, where most of the tribal colleges are located. Unemployment rates in these communities have consistently exceeded 70 percent for the past decade. Little private-sector employment exists. On the Rosebud Reservation, for example, in 1986 only one job in five was in a for-profit business; the remainder were in education, health care, social services, government, or other public agencies (Sinte Gleska study). Although Native communities typically have many vigorous micro-enterprises, which operate in private homes, the formally organized portions of reservation economies tend to produce few jobs and little wealth. About 98 percent of tribal college students, in consequence, qualify for need-based federal financial aid.

Economic hardships in reservation communities are compounded by the hardships of geographic and cultural isolation, and by extreme climatic conditions. Many students must regularly drive 120 miles or more for each day of classes. Snow, ice, and cold, from December through April, are normal and severe obstacles to travel in rural and remote areas. Both cars and telephones are scarce resources in many Native communities, and if students can afford automobiles, they are liable to be old, inefficient, and vulnerable to breakdowns. Colleges have dealt with transportation issues in several ways: by developing their own bus services; by decentralizing and moving classes to the students; by collaborating with other local agencies to develop comprehensive rural transportation systems. Similarly, several colleges have dealt with the absence of day care facilities in their communities by developing their own systems, or by supporting other local agencies to fill the needs.

The tribal colleges serve communities which extend beyond the boundaries of individual reservations, and beyond the memberships of individual tribes. Each tribal college enrolls a significant percent of non-Native students. For Sinte Gleska, this group regularly comprises about one-fourth of the total student body. Non-Natives living on or near reservations face many of the same obstacles to higher education as do Native students: geographic isolation; extreme distances to postsecondary institutions; declining rural economies; limited personal financial resources; family and job obligations. Both personal stories and continuing enrollment patterns indicate that most non-Natives who enroll find tribal colleges to be accessible and satisfying. These students, in discussing their college experiences, often suggest that their newfound minority status provides them with useful and unanticipated opportunities to explore and re-value Native communities and ways of life. Around several reservations, non-Native alumni of tribal colleges are beginning to help to erode the encrusted barriers of racism, political inequity, and economic exclusion which still divide their regions.

Recruitment and Retention

Getting the Word Out

The founders of tribal colleges recognized from the outset that, if Native students were to be well served, colleges needed to be integral parts of their communities — geographically, culturally, socially, economically, and organizationally. Simply being close to students geographically is, however, a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for success. Each of the colleges is open to, and intertwined with, its community on many levels. For example, rather than creating separate and exclusive organizations for student extracurricular activities, many colleges contribute to community softball leagues, pow-wows, rodeos, sobriety dances, and other functions which serve entire populations. Members of college boards of directors frequently serve their communities as leaders in other respects as well, and college faculty and staff often have visible, positive roles in other local organizations. The colleges have become major employers on their reservations, and college facilities, expertise and resources are regularly used or shared by other groups.

Thus news about the colleges can, and does, travel though many channels. The institutions are open, transparent, and accountable, and these qualities reinforce the sense of local ownership provided by local control. Together, this ownership and control build identification and comfort with the colleges in Native communities. Formal educational institutions, in these same communities, have sometimes been regarded, with ample justification, as irrelevant at best, and at worst, alien, condescending, and predatory. But within tribal colleges, decision-making processes are consistently open to community observation; what college administrators occasionally lose in tranquility they more than regain, over the long-term, in credibility, acceptance, and acknowledgement.

Openness and accessibility likewise aid recruitment and retention. As the tribal colleges grow with their communities, the normal processes of academic life — registering, graduating, applying for financial aid, selecting courses of study — become incorporated as regular parts of local life. Students at non-Native colleges have long been able find out about college life from relatives and friends, through informal processes of information

transfer and mentoring. Now these resources are available to tribal college students, and potential students, as well.

For more formal communications, tribal colleges have used whatever opportunities have been available locally. Conventional media strategies, devised for urban areas, are difficult to apply on reservations. Geographically isolated, most tribal colleges are far removed from even minor media markets. The closest television stations and daily newspapers are frequently located in cities hundreds of miles away. Local weekly newspapers, however, have often been generous and supportive in their coverage of college news and events. Local radio stations — particularly low-power FM stations targeted specifically at Native audiences — have likewise been helpful. In addition to promotional announcements, several colleges broadcast their own regular programs on topics of general interest to their communities. In addition, many colleges make splendid posters and visual materials, using local artists and incorporating exuberant and flourishing local artistic traditions.

Personal Relationships

Tribal colleges maintain close contacts, not simply with individual students, but with whole families and communities. These contacts shape recruitment and retention activities. One recruiter at Little Big Horn College, for example, recognizing that extended families form natural support groups for their students, works with whole cohorts of cousins at once. Despite the fact that many colleges are less than 15 years old, second and third generations of students from the same families are enrolling frequently. Most colleges combine an understanding of family-oriented recruitment patterns with more conventional efforts: sending representatives to local high college awareness programs; providing academic scholarship awards to promising high school graduates; familiarizing high school counselors with college programs and services.

Since, however, a very high percentage of tribal college enrollees have high school equivalency certificates rather than diplomas, the institutions have also developed ways to deal with the particular needs of these students. Many colleges operate adult basic education programs for their communities; high proportions of GED graduates continue on to enroll in degree programs. By that point, college staff members have, in most cases, already become familiar with individual educational needs and learning patterns.

Students who have not been involved in formal education for some time — and many recent high school graduates — need opportunities to build skills, both academic and personal, to enable them to succeed. Most tribal colleges, therefore, evaluate each student's needs and academic situation at the beginning of his or her college career. This assessment, which usually combines conversations with diagnostic testing, frequently leads to the requirement that the student take one or more developmental courses (numbered below basic freshman level) to strengthen basic mathematics or language skills. Occasionally, students themselves will request to enter these classes, as a way of building confidence before they proceed. Many colleges also provide individual tutors, or study skills centers, which students may use at any time during their course work; these centers frequently stress the development of writing and communications skills as crucial to academic success.

In addition to academic reinforcement, tribal colleges work to strengthen student attitudes towards academic and personal responsibility. At Turtle Mountain Community College, if a student misses three classes, he or she is contacted immediately by a college staff member, and efforts are made to resolve any difficulties. At Sisseton-Wahpeton Community College (SWCC), distribution of financial aid is pro-rated for first year students, who may choose to receive portions of their living stipends monthly or semi-monthly. Disbursement is made only on condition that the student has been attending regularly. Again, support is available, both from SWCC staff and from other organizations within the community, to work through problems. The approaches used by Turtle Mountain, Sisseton, and other colleges require careful monitoring of student attendance, performance, and morale. These techniques entail moderate investments in record-keeping, and detailed knowledge of community life.

The colleges work to make sure that students understand, at each step of the enrollment and assessment process, what is happening, and why. The colleges also try to communicate to students that the purpose of the developmental courses is supportive and preventive, not punitive. The colleges work to identify problems early, and to encourage students to develop constructive ways of addressing them — through tutoring, counseling, developing new study habits, rearranging study areas, whatever it takes to get on with the business of acquiring an education. Fundamental to this approach is an appreciation, on the part of faculty and staff, of the intense motivation of most tribal college students, coupled with a recognition of the legitimacy of the colleges' standards of performance. Weakening requirements for students, by

bending standards or making unwarranted exceptions, weakens the institution as well. Instead, tribal colleges work to help students acquire whatever skills they need to succeed. If the colleges allowed students to continue with impaired skills or diluted educations, those students would only continue to face the limited choices — in employment, careers, and further education — with which they are already familiar.

Student support services at tribal colleges generally attempt to make effective use of scarce resources. The small size of most institutions, coupled with their strong focus on students, facilitate communication among faculty, registrars, support staff, and financial aid personnel. Academic advising, financial aid counseling, and career-planning assistance can often be interwoven for each student by faculty and staff who are familiar both with the individual and with the institution's processes. Fort Berthold Community College has formalized a mentoring process for its students, making available to them contact with several graduates. Colleges also work closely with other agencies in their communities — social services, alcoholism and drug abuse prevention programs, vocational rehabilitation, etc. Since the budgets of tribal colleges often do not permit the institutions to have their own comprehensive student support services, most institutions establish close relationships with, and make referrals to, local organizations which can provide assistance to students.

Tribal colleges likewise encourage students who have not succeeded to try again. As many as one-third of the students at most of the institutions have been enrolled previously at some other college. The simple accessibility of a tribal college frequently provides an incentive to resume efforts at higher education. Federal financial aid policies place sharp limits on the number of times an adult learner without independent means can afford to try for an education, but within those constraints, tribal colleges work to provide opportunities and support for repeated efforts. Thus, in any academic term, as many as 10 to 20 percent of tribal college students may have used up their federal financial aid eligibility, but still need assistance in order to complete their educational programs. Few resources are available to provide this support, but the colleges continue to recognize an obligation to these students.

The social climate at tribal colleges also contributes significantly to student retention. Students and staff repeatedly describe their colleges as functioning "like an extended family," with warmth, humor, and discipline provided in culturally appropriate ways. The colleges are inclusive; parents, children, relatives, friends, and community members regularly turn up at college events, and may pass through campus areas daily. Special efforts are made at graduations and other ceremonial occasions to honor the families of students, and to recognize the values and contributions of Elders. For faculty and staff, personal and social relationships with students continue as a matter of course after they graduate or leave the institution, since they remain within their communities. Interestingly, most tribal colleges also have an informal support networks, primarily composed of former faculty and staff, who have left the institutions and the reservations, but who return for visits, and keep up with the news.

Curricula and Teaching Styles

Tribal colleges vary considerably, one from another, on matters of curriculum, educational philosophy, and teaching styles. The diversity emerges from the institutions' commitments to serve the educational needs of their local communities. These needs differ with the social, economic, cultural, and historical circumstance of each reservation. Some basic common approached, however, appear in degree programs. Most colleges offer a general studies degree at the associate level, as preparation for entry into baccalaureate programs. In response to employment needs on most reservations, many institutions offer degrees in human services or social work. Some colleges are also providing degrees or certificates in alcoholism and drug abuse training. Students in tribal colleges share with their colleagues on other campuses a strong interest in business and management. Most colleges offer degree programs these fields. These programs frequently have the largest enrollments at their respective institutions. Another common feature of many colleges is a program to prepare Native teachers for local classrooms. At two-year institutions, tribal college education curricula are frequently combined with upper division course work at nearby universities. Both Sinte Gleska (54 bachelor's in education as of 1990) and Oglala Lakota Colleges (45 bachelor's as of 1989) also offer baccalaureate degrees, and Sinte Gleska has already produced 13 graduates from its master's program in education. The impacts of significant numbers of locally-trained, professionally- and culturally-skilled teachers and administrators in reservation schools have yet to be assessed; it is clear, however, that potential implications for all of Native education may be significant.

Indian studies and language departments likewise form a central part of the intellectual and spiritual life at many tribal colleges. (Several institutions have chosen to incorporate these fields of study elsewhere in their curricula; the study of language and culture, however, retain their centrality no matter where they are housed.) The evolution of these departments, and the degree programs they offer, has been comparatively gradual at many institutions, in part due to scarcities of qualified staff and appropriate instructional materials. Instructors in these programs must not only have thorough knowledge of their subject areas, but must be able to organize and transmit this knowledge through new cultural forms — lectures, seminars, articles, films, videos, recordings — which were not indigenous to Native communities. In addition, materials which have been written about particular Native culture groups by outsiders may, for a variety of reasons, not be suitable for use in tribal college classrooms. Most colleges have found it necessary to prepare their own texts for language, literature, and music. Recognizing their faculties' expertise and confidence in the creation of courses and materials, several colleges have begun to discuss the formation of a national professional organization to support, evaluate, and accredit Indian studies programs.

Vocational programs, at both the certificate and associate levels, are also essential parts of the curricula at most tribal colleges. Stability in these programs has been difficult to attain, however, because of the methods of dispersal of federal funds specifically designated for vocational training. Tribal colleges must compete individually for grants which support three-year vocational programs. The selection criteria in the grant competitions are weighted to discourage investment in capital-intensive curricula, and the program regulations minimize chances for continued support after the original grant expires. In many cases, the tribal colleges have needed to replace federal vocational education funds with scarce money from alternative sources, in order to maintain existing curricula after the expiration of a grant. State institutions, in contrast, receive regular annual allocations of federal vocational education monies, which may then be used over time to build or upgrade programs.

Within these limits, tribal colleges have, over 15 years, developed occupational and vocational programs which fit their social, economic and natural environments: aquaculture on the Lummi reservation; forestry at Salish Kootenai, Stonechild, and Sinte Gleska; game and fisheries management at Little Hoop; agriculture and natural resource management at Sisseton; dental assistant training at Salish Kootenai; nursing (a baccalaureate program) at Oglala Lakota. Many colleges offer the only sources of training in their regions in data processing and computer applications. Tribal colleges have become increasingly diverse in their approaches to vocational education: Stonechild trains students in log house construction. Oglala Lakota offers curricula in management/entrepreneurship and in media communications. Little Hoop works with the local tribal industry in pre-employment training, and in a specialized program for mid-level managers. Bay Mills Community College, through its Women's Advocacy Program, prepares female heads of household to enter the workforce. The college also offers beginning management training in support of a tribal enterprise program, and prepares students for employment in the local tourism industry.

In general, tribal colleges chose their curricula by determining, through consultation with their communities, what is appropriate and cost-effective. Financial resources are scarce for faculty salaries and curriculum development. The colleges can afford to meet only a few of the most pressing local educational needs. This concentration on educational essentials appears to enhance student interest, performance, and retention.

Similar pragmatism underlies choices of teaching methods and instructional techniques. Both cooperative learning and holistic teaching approaches are widely used, but no single technical method is shared by all of the colleges, much less by faculty within those institutions. Instead, successful instructors at each college appear to arrive at a recognition that cultural differences are real and legitimate, and that these differences shape and strengthen learning styles and social behaviors. Tribal colleges recognize, as a basic premise, that many Native students approach their academic experiences in ways identifiably different from those of students in the mainstream American culture. Instructors work to identify and understand these differences, and to devise instructional strategies which build on their students' strengths. At most colleges, Native instructors or administrators, as members of the local community, serve as informal mentors or cultural translators for instructors who may be less familiar with tribal contexts and social patterns. Faculty from Navajo Community College, in testimony to the Task Force, pointed out that their institution has formalized this process. The college has identified, made explicit, and is working to

implement, the Dine Philosophy of Learning, an approach to education based in traditional Navajo values and epistemology. Acquiring the information and sensitivity necessary to work across these cultural boundaries takes time, both for faculty members and for institutions. As individual colleges become more experienced at working in their own communities, they appear to become more distinct both in their educational and their organizational styles.

Evidence of Educational Outcomes

The contexts in which tribal colleges began their work were disheartening. In the early 1970s, mainstream postsecondary institutions regularly experienced attrition rates among Native students in excess of 90 percent. Native students from reservation communities who became discouraged, or were unable to continue, often appeared to give up, not only on higher education, but on their own futures. Simultaneously, however, educational patterns among non-Native students began to shift, especially after the Vietnam War. Older students enrolled in greater numbers; students took longer to complete their degrees. Increasing numbers began their academic careers at two-year institutions. More students remained involved in formal education after they had completed an initial degree. These changes altered the tempos of American higher education. By the end of the 1980s, for example, fewer than one-third of the students entering a major state university in the north central states graduated within five years with bachelor's degrees. Testimony to the Task Force indicated that, in 1990, the median time taken for the attainment of a bachelor's degree, nation-wide, is six years.

Tribal colleges came fairly early to recognize that their own successes, and those of their students, ought not to be evaluated solely by yardsticks appropriate to other communities. Nor should those evaluations be based on assumptions that tribal college students could, or should, progress in lockstep towards degrees. Many tribal college students have families, and therefore must proceed towards degrees at a pace which is realistic for them. Tribal colleges also serve other constituencies: people taking one or two courses to improve job skills; individuals who enroll in a single course out of general interest; staff of public-sector programs who take workshops or special courses developed for them. The communities served by the colleges are geographically and socially isolated; the tribal colleges are often the sole providers in their areas for educational services — adult and community education, skills upgrading, professional development or recertification — which, in more populous areas, would be provided by a whole range of institutions, public and private.

Not all tribal college students intend to earn degrees. Not all students who intend to earn degrees can complete their work in the minimum allotted time. (This point, however obvious, is apparently worth belaboring. During congressional appropriations testimony in 1988, a Senate staff person argued that a two-year tribal college with 500 students should, logically, be expected to produce 250 graduates each year.)

In order to assess the effectiveness of tribal colleges in educating their students, AIHEC, in the spring of 1990, gathered data from six of the accredited institutions, those with large enough enrollments, and long enough track records, to generate statistically significant data: Oglala Lakota; Sinte Gleska; Standing Rock; Turtle Mountain; Salish Kootenai; and Blackfeet. Information was collected for the period 1983-89 (AIHEC, 1990, pp. 4-5). During these years, the six colleges graduated 1575 Indian people. Of these graduates, 210 earned one-year vocational certificates, 1198 earned associate degrees, 158 earned bachelor's degrees, and 9 earned master's degrees in education.

About one-third of these graduates, primarily those with vocational certificates and associate degrees, continued their educations after graduation. The remainder sought employment within their communities. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of tribal college graduates who pursued advanced degrees outside their communities returned after the completion of their academic work.

Tribal college graduates have been successful in finding employment. Depending on the reservation, 83 to 88 percent of the graduates of the six colleges studied were employed. These figures contrast sharply with local unemployment rates, which range from 54 percent on the Flathead Reservation (home of Salish Kootenai College) to 85 percent on the Rosebud Reservation (home of Sinte Gleska College). Independent evidence (Wright & Weasel Head, in press) indicates that 75 percent of tribal college graduates in Montana are employed in fields related to their degrees. Of the remaining 25 percent, approximately half indicated that they had already been working for their employer prior to entering a tribal college.

The employment rates of tribal college graduates are particularly significant because they represent gains made primarily by Native female heads of households, whose median age was about

30 years, with little previous experience in the workforce. Most of these students had been receiving general assistance or Aid to Families with Dependent Children prior to enrolling in college. Similar gains in employability appear to be taking place at every tribal college; data from Stone Child College, on the Rocky Boy Reservation, and Sisseton-Wahpeton Community College, paralleled or exceeded those from the larger and older institutions.

Independent assessments are also beginning to confirm observations made from within the tribal colleges — that tribal college students are fundamentally pleased with their educational experiences. In a recent study of Montana tribal college graduates (Wright & Weasel Head, in press) 33 percent of those surveyed rated their "preparation for continuing your education" as "excellent," and 38 percent rated it "good." Eighty-six percent of graduates surveyed rated the preparation of their instructors as "good" or "excellent." Graduates rated "the quality of educational training received" with a mean of 3.36 on a scale of four, indicating a high degree of satisfaction.

Completion rates at tribal colleges also appear to bear favorable comparison with those of other postsecondary institutions. Data from three of the colleges — Salish Kootenai, Turtle Mountain, and Sisseton-Wahpeton — indicate that as many as 80 percent of students enrolled in any academic term complete their courses; it is not yet clear what percentage of students eventually completes a degree, or the range of times normally required for those completions. A study of Montana tribal college students (Wright, 1989, pp. 126-7), however, revealed that a majority of students who discontinued their education did so for non-academic reasons. Furthermore, among the academic reasons expressed, students most frequently cited: the unavailability of desired majors and courses; uncertainty about choice of major or degree program; and the need for a break from studies. Non-returning students cited, as reasons for not going back to college: home responsibilities (27.5 percent); personal problems (24.5 percent); insufficient money (22.5 percent); the unavailability of desired major or program (21.6 percent); and the need for a temporary break from studies (19.6 percent). Dissatisfaction with the quality of tribal colleges, or the students' experiences in them, did not emerge as significant reasons for leaving the colleges.

Tribal college students are beginning, in significant numbers, to obtain degrees at off-reservation institutions. The experiences of tribal college students who transfer to off-reservation institutions, or complete graduate degrees, likewise are beginning to provide evidence of the strength of their academic preparation. By their own accounts, individual Native students who have earned graduate and professional degrees at the University of South Dakota Law School, Montana State University, the University of North Dakota, Harvard Law School, Arizona State University, the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the University of Nebraska, or South Dakota State University would not have been able to attend without their experiences at the tribal colleges. As of June 1990, the graduates of a single two-year institution, Turtle Mountain Community College, had earned 155 bachelor's degrees, 25 master's degrees, 3 law and doctoral degrees.

These results are, in themselves, remarkable. They make clear the role which the colleges play in providing Native students access to other postsecondary institutions. Beyond this, however, a study still in progress (Wright, personal communication) indicates that, in Montana, tribal college students who transferred to three state universities, and remained until their senior years, performed academically as well as, or better than, other Indian students at those same institutions. This data also suggests that, if former tribal college students terminated their educations before graduating from the four-year institutions to which they had transferred, they left for non-academic reasons — family responsibilities, finances, employment opportunities, etc. This statistical evidence reinforces narrative evidence from each institution; tribal colleges are providing education of quality to whole groups of Native students who had previously been excluded, for a variety of reasons, from colleges and universities. With that education, Native people are changing their lives.

Evidence of Outcomes: Colleges Strengthening Communities

In addition to the contributions tribal colleges make to the lives of their students as individuals, the institutions also contribute significantly to their communities: through their facilities; through their roles as conservers, innovators, and adapters of traditional values to new situations; and through their abilities to focus sustained energy on local issues and problems. Libraries at tribal colleges, for example, are frequently the only libraries serving their entire regions. Increasing numbers of the colleges are establishing professionally managed archives for their tribal communities, so that historical records will be

accessible to the people whose history they record. Oglala Lakota College, with a grant from the Ford Foundation, is working with other tribal colleges to train archival personnel and strengthen management capacities.

Tribal colleges are ideally situated, geographically and intellectually, to provide their communities with applied research. For most, the tribal language and culture have been areas of immediate concern; instructors have often needed to develop appropriate curriculum materials from scratch. Several colleges are collecting oral histories, literature, and songs, and making them available through publications and recordings. Tribal college faculty are gaining recognition beyond their communities not only for their expertise on their own cultures and languages, but for their abilities to share that expertise with non-Native audiences. Two faculty members from Sinte Gleska's Lakota Studies Department recently made substantial professional contributions to the cultural sensitivity of the film, "Dances With Wolves." Blackfeet Community College, Salish Kootenai, and Sinte Gleska have each established summer cultural camps which share local knowledge of traditional ways of life, thought, and belief with increasingly international groups of students.

Economic and development issues form a second area of research for several colleges. Work on these topics frequently requires financial and technical resources which are expensive and difficult to maintain in isolated reservation communities. Nevertheless, a few colleges have already made significant contributions to the body of useful knowledge available about their regions. Oglala Lakota College has established a research institute which has examined issues of rural transportation, leadership, land use, and the economic behavior of very small enterprises. Sinte Gleska's Institute for Economic Development produced studies of reservation employment patterns, and a detailed analysis of federal transfer payments to tribal members. Research work at each of those colleges has led to the formation of spin-off organizations. Both the Lakota Fund at Pine Ridge and the Rosebud Reservation Enterprise Center provide technical support and small loans to entrepreneurs in their communities, using peer-group lending techniques developed in Bangladesh. Each entity began through research conducted at the respective tribal college. Sinte Gleska has also established an institute for tribal governance, which has provided technical and research support to the tribal government and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Tribal colleges also serve as centers of thought and action from which to address other local problems. Turtle Mountain Community College sponsors public forums which provide, in a neutral setting, information and opportunities for discussion about important local issues. Many colleges work with other local organizations in combatting alcoholism and chemical dependency through community education, sponsoring support groups, and community activities such as sobriety walks, and through training counselors and community workers. Sinte Gleska, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, has targeted several communities on the large Rosebud Reservation for intensive work in prevention and community education. Several colleges have likewise established programs for AIDS education. Cheyenne River Community College has worked more generally on community wellness and preventive care issues.

Tribal colleges have also confronted issues of political, social, and racial inequity. When, for example, the governor of South Dakota declared 1990 as a year of reconciliation between the state's Native and non-Native peoples, tribal colleges in the state became catalysts for communication. The institutions brought together diverse groups with disparate views; together they explored the legitimacy of the concept of reconciliation, and examined possibilities for its achievement. Other colleges, faced with different situations, have taken different approaches. Little Big Horn College provided strong leadership for court battles which succeeded in ending decades of voting rights abuses against members of the Crow Tribe in the state of Montana.

Several tribal colleges are working to improve the quality of local elementary and secondary education, not only by training Native teachers and teacher aides, but by redefining educational policies, or restructuring the schools themselves. In San Diego, Sherry Red Owl, a founding board member of Sinte Gleska College, told the Task Force about the college's education forums — reservation-wide meetings of educators, administrators, Elders, parents, and political leaders. These forums bring together groups which do not ordinarily discuss educational policy with each other; the groups are systematically reviewing, assessing, and redesigning educational approaches for Rosebud, in order to produce a "blueprint for Indian education." The blueprint will serve not only to guide educational development, at all levels, on the Rosebud Reservation, but also to create and model a process which other

colleges and Native communities may adapt to their own situations.

Other colleges are working with specific local schools. In Montana, for example, Two Eagle Rivers High School is located on the campus of Salish Kootenai College. Northwest Indian College is developing a Middle College, to provide institutional links between high school and college work; Little Big Horn College offer enrichment opportunities, in the form of science and mathematics camps, for junior high school students. The skills and approaches which have worked in the colleges may have applications at other levels in Native schools as well.

Constraints

As vigorous and successful as the tribal colleges have been, they are highly vulnerable institutions. They depend for operating monies on the federal government, by which they have been penalized severely for their achievements in the education of Native students. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in its report, *Tribal Colleges: Shaping The Future of Native America* (Carnegie Foundation, 1989, p. 70), summarized the situation: "The harsh truth is, however, that federal support has been woefully insufficient: it simply has not kept pace with the rate of growth in the tribal colleges, or with their most basic needs." The BIA has never requested sufficient funds for the tribal colleges from the Congress; indeed the Carnegie Foundation, in 1989, noted the absence of a spirit of cooperation between the national levels of the BIA and the tribal colleges. Nor has the Congress ever appropriated monies to the colleges to the limits established by law. Attitudes in both the BIA and Congress show signs of change, however; for fiscal 1991, Congress increased significantly the dollar amount appropriated per Indian student, and for the first time, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has appealed to the Office of Management and Budget, the President's budget watchdogs, to increase the amounts requested from Congress for the colleges.

Monies are distributed to the colleges by the BIA proportionately, through a formula which is adjusted annually. The BIA adds together the total number of credit hours for which all Indian students at each of the colleges are enrolled during the year, and calculates an Indian Student Count (ISC), roughly comparable to the number of full-time equivalent students. This number is then divided into the dollar amount of the total congressional appropriation for the colleges, yielding a dollar amount per ISC. Each college then should receive a share of the funds based on its number of ISCs for the year. For fiscal year 1990, each tribal college received $2,200 per ISC.

By comparison, in the state of Montana, three public two year colleges of comparable size to the tribal colleges averaged a cost per student in 1989-90 of $4,340, of which $3,838 was state and local funding. In North Dakota, costs per student at the public two-year colleges in the same year averaged $5,030, of which slightly less than $3,800 came from state and local governments. One Native two-year college which is administered directly by the BIA received a bit more than $10,000 per student for fiscal year 1991 (AIHEC, 1990, p. 11).

Federal funds are, and should be, the basic revenue source for the tribal colleges. The Native communities they serve have very limited resources and revenue bases. The realities of local poverty set sharp limits on the amounts of tuition which the colleges can collect. Yet since 1981, federal support to the colleges has eroded steadily. Inflation has, over time, reduced the value of their appropriations; more significant, however, is the cumulative impact of the colleges' success. Enrollment has grown, when all colleges are added together, at a rate of about ten percent per year; the modest increases in total federal appropriations simply have not kept pace. This has produced a bitter irony; the tribal colleges, by helping each other to grow, and expanding the opportunities for increasing numbers of Native students, have each diminished their own resources (See Table 1).

TABLE 1
Trends in Funding per Indian Student Count for Tribal Colleges by Year

Fiscal Year	Indian Student Count (ISC)	Dollars per ISC
1981	1689	$3,100
1982	2087	$2,826
1983	2194	$2,865
1984	2616	$2,506
1985	2853	$2,459
1986	3000	$2,317
1987	3200	$2,517
1988	3908	$2,159
1989	4400	$1,964
1990	4795	$2,200
1991	4975	$3,000

This steady shrinking of the financial base has affected the colleges severely. Full-time faculty salaries at many tribal colleges average $19,000 per year. Salaries in the same disciplines at neighboring state institutions exceed $30,000 annually. Dedicated faculty and administrators may stay at

their tribal colleges for the satisfaction which their jobs bring, but their eventual replacements are increasingly unwilling to settle for unreasonable salaries and slender fringe benefit packages. Many institutions rely heavily on part-time faculty. While this may be a prudent use of resources for the short term, the building of curricula and degree programs of high quality demands at least some full-time attention. Without additional resources, these concerns are likely to worsen. Projections of academic workforces in the 1990s all point to a decrease in the supply of college faculty, which in turn will bring an increase in faculty salaries; for the same period, projections of tribal college student populations indicate continued expansions in enrollments.

Salaries aside, basic academic operations may cost more in remote rural areas than in cities. In 1989, researchers (Hargreaves & Chang, 1989, p. 63) found that a standard market basket of food cost about 30 percent more in a community on the Rosebud Reservation than in the city of Sioux Falls. Similar price differentials exist for equipment and services, both because of additional transportation charges, and because of the absence of competition in many rural areas. But tribal colleges need the same sorts of physical equipment and supplies as do colleges in urban areas. Library resources, often meager, are unable to keep pace with the expanding needs for information of increasingly well-educated and developing communities. Laboratory equipment and computer technology likewise demand regular replacement and upgrading, if the educational missions of the institutions are to be served.

Physical facilities also need attention. Most tribal colleges began life in architectural cast-offs and hand-me-downs, buildings which had been abandoned (and sometimes condemned) by their former occupants. Many tribal colleges are still there, dealing with expensive heating bills, leaky roofs, damaged computers, and the occasional rodent or bat. The endemic humor of the colleges makes light of the difficulties, but the high costs of operation and the losses of efficiency remain.

Vocational education at tribal colleges needs additional resources. The colleges have demonstrated their capacities, during the past 20 years, to help students move from economic dependency into the workforce. The students who have made this transition have been, by any definition, among the hard-core unemployed — female heads of households, without high school diplomas, in their late 20s and early 30s, without significant employment experience. Yet the colleges are unable to obtain stable and adequate support for vocational training, while such monies are regularly provided by the federal government, as a matter of course, to state vocational institutions which have weaker track records in serving Native students.

Recommendations

The first recommendation of the report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1989, p. 69) has not yet been implemented, and therefore bears repeating:

> First, we urgently recommend that the federal government adequately support tribal colleges by providing the full funding authorized by Congress. Specifically, we recommend that the $5,820 authorized per student be appropriated and that, from this point on, federal appropriations keep pace with the growth of Indian student enrollment.

The tribal colleges continue to demonstrate their successes in providing education, and hope, to Native people and to their communities, in remote and isolated areas, under difficult conditions. In many tribal communities, there is little else which works as well. The tribal colleges have likewise shown that they provide not one replicable model, but several, for effective community involvement with, and control of, a sophisticated educational institution. The colleges have devised and shared techniques for economic and social development, alcoholism prevention and treatment, and adult education. But the colleges cannot continue, much less build on their potential, without adequate financial support.

Secondly, the federal government needs to reexamine policies for student financial aid. Janine Pease-Windy Boy, president of Little Big Horn College and a member of the INAR Task Force, argued persuasively in her testimony that federal financial aid policies need to be re-examined and adjusted to take into account the experiences of tribal college students. Loans do not appear to be an appropriate primary ingredient for financial aid to impoverished students from communities with low wages and high unemployment. Several tribal colleges have declined to participate in federal guaranteed student loan programs, lest their students be encouraged to accumulate large debts. If a student needs to interrupt his or her studies for personal, family, or even financial reasons, payments come due on any loans already received. Yet stop-and-start patterns of enrollment appears to be common, and healthy, among tribal college students. Federal requirements also place strict limits on the number of terms for which a student may

receive financial aid. Some limits are necessary, but the number of terms needs to be adjusted to deal realistically with the needs of adult learners, who may not be able to maintain the same schedules as full-time students.

Thirdly, federal agencies need to provide more occasions for tribal colleges to participate in existing programs. This is particularly essential in such areas as agriculture, rural economic development, science and technology education, and historical, linguistic, and cultural preservation. Tribal colleges have demonstrated that they provide uniquely stable and productive environments for innovative work within Native communities. The federal government has designated special opportunities for Historically Black Colleges and Universities to compete for existing programs and monies. This approach requires no additional federal appropriations, but instead a more effective targeting of resources to institutions which can use them effectively. Similar approaches and resources need to be made more accessible to tribal colleges as well. Likewise, new legislation and regulations for federal vocational education programs need to be refined so that the intent of the drafters — increased support for tribal colleges — is not subverted by state governments competing for these resources. Similarly, written testimony submitted to the Task Force argued forcefully that assistance for developing institutions under Title III of the Higher Education Act needs to be made more accessible to tribal colleges.

Fourthly, tribal colleges are now the only major federally-funded institutions of Native education which do not receive forward funding. (This is a budgeting technique used for some federal programs, in which monies are appropriated one year in advance. This assures that organizations which are forward funded will not get caught without budgets, should the Congress fail to approve appropriations legislation on time). Financial uncertainty each fall wreaks havoc with tribal college budgets and operations, as the Bureau of Indian Affairs awaits the passage of appropriations legislation before sending operating monies to the colleges. Forward funding needs to be adopted by the Congress as soon as possible.

Two other issues require remedy through federal legislation. With few exceptions, the colleges' physical facilities are grimly inadequate, in both size and condition. No federal funds have ever been appropriated for construction, however, and only in 1990 was money provided for emergency repairs — literally to keep roofs from falling in. Monies must be found for new and decent buildings for the tribal colleges. Likewise, federal law has established that congressional appropriations should be used to match those funds which the colleges raise for their endowments. As the institutions become more visible and more successful, they must not be penalized for their efforts to create long-term financial stability; federal funds to match endowments must be increased.

On the state level, state governments need to provide tribal colleges with funds to cover the cost of educating non-Native students. The colleges receive no operating funds from the federal government for these students. The tuition collected from them covers no more than one-fifth of the colleges' total educational costs. The colleges provide valuable and unique services to these students, services for which state governments have ultimate responsibility. The dollar amounts involved would be minor from the perspective of the states, but significant and highly useful to the tribal colleges.

Additionally, state universities and colleges need to continue to develop collaborative relationships with tribal colleges. These relationships must be founded in mutual respect, minimizing condescension or territorial defensiveness which have marred such efforts in the past. Tribal colleges have demonstrated their capacities to prepare students for baccalaureate or graduate work at other institutions, their skills at providing education grounded in cultural values and traditions, and their abilities to conduct useful and imaginative research. These strengths, if coordinated with those of other non-Native institutions, can add materially to the quality of education and human life in their regions.

Philanthropic organizations and foundations have been slow to recognize and acknowledge the value of tribal colleges. Several foundations have expressed discomfort with the small size, and apparent lack of national impact, of the colleges. The Bush and MacArthur Foundations, on the other hand, have been conspicuous as leaders and innovators in their support of individual colleges. The Carnegie Foundation report (1989, pp. 83-85) encouraged foundations to support the Tribal College Institute, the journal, *Tribal College*, and the office of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium in Washington, D.C. To the recommendation of the Carnegie Foundation must be added encouragement to support the American Indian College Fund, which has established its effectiveness and credibility during the first year of operation.

Corporate donors have likewise been hesitant, for the most part, to support tribal colleges. Corporate giving policies frequently restrict donations to geographical areas in which plants or businesses

are located. Such rules exclude tribal colleges on economically desolated reservations. Again, the national efforts of the American Indian College Fund, the journal and the institute may provide suitable opportunities for corporate donors, but they are also encouraged to re-think the implications of their giving policies for the tribal colleges in particular, and Native and rural education in general.

Tribal governments have, for the most part, been strongly supportive of the colleges which serve their reservations, and understanding of the colleges' needs for administrative and fiscal integrity. Several governments, however, have viewed the colleges not as independent and autonomous institutions chartered by tribal council action, but as a tribal program subject to management by elected political officials. Inappropriate political intervention in the operation of any college places its academic integrity, and its accreditation, at risk. Those tribal colleges which have thrived are those which have been able to place a perceptible distance between themselves and the turbulence of elective tribal politics. Those tribal governments which have not recognized these lessons place their colleges in jeopardy.

Tribal colleges need, as resources become available, to address the issue of baccalaureate level education for their students. Only two colleges, Sinte Gleska and Oglala Lakota, currently offer bachelor's degrees. The Task Force heard repeatedly from tribal college students, faculty, and staff, voicing the hope that their local colleges would move towards baccalaureate and graduate education.

Lastly, the colleges themselves need to pay more attention, as resources become available, to research about themselves and their communities. Location and context are important; research done within, and for the use of, tribal communities is not the same as research which treats those communities, or their members, as distant objects. The colleges, individually or in groups, need to find ways to provide their communities with access to specialized research skills, and to a core group of trained researchers familiar with tribal needs and issues. The colleges also need funds, from the federal and foundation sources, to strengthen contemporary research capacities, and to build archives and museum collections to support historical research. The colleges themselves are appropriate subjects of inquiry; they have created innovative results by developing appropriate educational techniques and new styles of organizations. The work itself has been so consuming, and the resources so scarce, that little time has been available to assess all of the outcomes, or record how they have been achieved. The conscious and reflective examination of both processes and outcomes is essential, if the tribal colleges are to take their rightful places of leadership in the Native, the national, and the international educational communities.

Lessons and Implications

The tribal colleges have derived new solutions to long-standing problems in Native education. This effort has required sustained, patient, hard work; many of the presidents, administrators, and faculty have been with their colleges since the doors opened. The colleges have become institutions, with institutional continuities and institutional memories. No three-year program, or succession of them, has provided comparable results. Benefiting from two decades of continuity, the colleges have been able to learn from their own experiences and those of others. The institutions have, over time, discarded less functional methods and approaches, and accumulated and refined those which work for them. They have shared, patiently and gradually, their experience and expertise with each other, and have built a network which provides information, support, and political effectiveness.

The colleges do not form a unitary system; their network is decentralized. No single, central organization has mastered the sensitivity and local knowledge necessary to serve the diversity of cultures, languages, economies and societies which form the colleges' constituencies.

The colleges demonstrate the utility of smallness, openness, and accountability for working in their reservations. The colleges know their students, their families, and their communities. And the communities know their colleges, not only as collections of teachers, friends, and relatives, but as institutions and as resources.

Ultimately, the colleges derive strength from their accountability. They hold themselves accountable, not only to their tribes, to funding sources, and to accreditation agencies, but also to the intentions for which they were established. The founders of the first colleges insisted that the inclusive values of tribal spiritual traditions be a foundation of the institutions. They insisted as well that the ultimate moral purposes of education at the tribal colleges be acknowledged, celebrated, and shared. They chose wisely.

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